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NORTH YEMEN - US: Seeking More Aid

North Yemeni President Salih has indicated new interest in improving relations with the US and obtaining more economic aid.

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Salih held a highly publicized meeting this week with the US Ambassador in Sanaa--his first since the Ambassador was appointed last year. Other senior Yemeni officials have followed up this approach with inquiries about buying US agricultural commodities under favorable credit terms. The Yemenis reportedly are unhappy with the stringent terms demanded by other suppliers.

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Comment: Sanaa has had to draw on its foreign assets because of a sizable trade deficit. Saudi Arabia--North Yemen's principal financial benefactor--and other moderate Persian Gulf states are not providing any substantial new assistance.

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Salih may hope to extract more economic aid from Moscow by publicizing his meeting with the US Ambassador. He also may believe closer ties to the US would ease Saudi Arabia's concerns over North Yemen's substantial purchases of arms from the USSR.

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the US defense attache has reported seeing a MIG-23 over Sanaa this week, the first such sighting. If the Soviets have delivered MIG-23s to North Yemen, the Saudis would be particularly upset.

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